

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Gunjan Tiyyagura and I am a pediatric Emergency Medicine physician and a clinical researcher at Yale New Haven Hospital, where I care for children in the New Haven community and beyond.

I stand in support of SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve.

As a pediatric emergency medicine physician, I take care of children and families during their most vulnerable times – when they are seeking care for healthcare emergencies. Too often, I have seen undocumented children, ineligible for HUSKY, seek care far too late, with life-threatening sequelae.

I recently cared for a young undocumented teenager with appendicitis. He was afraid to seek care when he first experienced pain, worried about the costs to him and his family. When I finally met him in the emergency room, he had severe appendicitis with the potential to burst—an outcome that could have been prevented if he sought care earlier in the course of his illness.

Lack of access to insurance puts children at serious risk and leads to dangerous health consequences that can be prevented. In cases like this, when care was sought too late, it requires more urgent interventions, putting a child's health at risk and costing our state much more than earlier, preventive care.

In our emergency room, we are also currently amidst a mental health crisis due to the secondary impacts of the pandemic. Children and adolescents are presenting with serious and untreated mental health concerns. Many undocumented children have already faced significant trauma in their lives, and without preventative care with a physician who may be able to diagnose and treat mental health concerns in earlier stages, more children are presenting in crisis – leading ultimately to increased costs and poorer health outcomes.

Insuring all CT children regardless of documentation is an important cost saving endeavor that will ultimately result in improved outcomes and productivity for our residents. Thank you for your time and consideration in the passage of S.B. 284, which will benefit not only Connecticut's children and families, but also the health and wellbeing of our state and its future.

I support S.B. 284, and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all community members in CT regardless of age or status. We need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration,
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